

Ruksana Osman • David J. Hornsby
Editors

Transforming Teaching and Learning in Higher Education

Towards a Socially Just Pedagogy in a Global
Context

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Editors

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INTRODUCTION: TRANSFORMING HIGHER EDUCATION

The call for transformation in higher education has become a global phenomenon. Epitomised with the #RhodesMustFall movement in South Africa in 2015, the idea that universities need to change how they relate to the knowledge project and how they structure and treat teaching and learning has gained momentum and has featured prominently all over the world¹. That said, the notion of the university as a site for transformation in higher education is not a new one. Arguably, universities have always been sites of transformation, where new information and knowledge has fundamentally shaped society and individuals. This has happened through the research undertaken and produced but also by our teaching and learning practice at universities. In this moment where calls are being made to transform university spaces, this book seeks to build theorised understandings of what transformation means in a pedagogical sense by highlighting a series of scholarship and practice from university teachers from across a range of disciplinary and geographical contexts.

We consider that the current debate about transformation in higher education speaks to concerns around how university education empowers (or not) students to challenge unequal and unjust societal practices. To do this, we tackle some of the meanings and conceptions associated with transforming higher education in relation to national and global demands, on the one hand, whilst touching on pedagogic possibilities, on the other hand. Thus, this volume contributes to a growing body of work on teaching and learning in higher education and how to effect social change, or what we call Socially Just Pedagogy. Each chapter addresses the idea of

advancing transformation in higher education by considering how to infuse pedagogy with ideas of social justice and what such pedagogy and practice looks like in different disciplinary areas and from scholars across country contexts, namely South Africa, India and Canada.

The book is structured by first considering the conceptual aspects of transformation and pedagogy followed by a series of case studies that explore how transformation practices can filter into our teaching and learning environments in universities globally. Given that transformation in higher education is not a specific disciplinary circumstance, we include contributions and insights from international relations, media studies, education studies, psychology, African literature and dramatic and fine arts. Scholars contributing to this collection draw on diverse methodological approaches to demonstrate that transformation can be integrated into our teaching and learning environments in different and imaginative ways, and that such integration raises complexities, conflicts and possibilities for teachers and students alike.

The first chapter by Osman and Hornsby seeks to frame the contribution of the book by engaging in a debate about the relationship between social justice, transformation and pedagogy, and what potential exists for institutions of higher learning. Drawing on a focused body of work and considering the contributions of this volume, a conceptual frame of what socially just pedagogy means is developed.

The second chapter considers the influence of a key theorist in transformation discussions, Stuart Hall. Carrim looks to the theoretical contribution of Stuart Hall to teaching and learning by engaging with his work on articulation and considering his conception of social reality. By doing this, Carrim offers insight into the conditions under which transformative pedagogies can be effective.

In [Chapter 3](#), Danai S. Mupotsa engages with the figure of the undutiful daughter to focus students on problematising disciplinary forms of knowledge and to disrupt traditional understandings of race, gender, and sexuality. This is a chapter invested in thinking about how the social and political locations of students from non-dominant locations. The author suggest ways of foregrounding awarenesses of difference such as sex, sexuality, gender, race, and class as an approach to thinking that is enabling, even when it does not always make us happy.

Maringe, in the fourth chapter, develops the link between social justice and pedagogy as a key aspect of what the current debate around transformation in higher education means. Maringe, after engaging in a thorough

consideration of the notion of socially just pedagogy, articulates and defines its elements, offering an interesting conceptual routing for those considering how to transform their teaching and learning environments by engaging in ideas of social justice.

In the first of the empirical contributions, Leibowitz, Naidoo, and Mayet engage with the idea that the scholarship of teaching and learning (SOTL) can assist in establishing socially just pedagogies. Through arguing for a form of reciprocity where teachers and students learn from each other, a key inhibitor of social justice – unequal power relations, can be mitigated. In [Chapter 5](#) of this collection, the authors provide evidence to support this conceptual framing through detailing the experience at the University of Johannesburg in South Africa.

Kiguwa in [Chapter 6](#) reflects upon her experiences in teaching undergraduate and postgraduate courses in critical diversity literacy and psychology. Adopting a pedagogy of disturbance, the author provides interesting insight into how we can get students to challenge assumptions and mainstream analysis of social phenomena. She argues that disturbance is an important element of socially just pedagogies and needs to incorporate the affective domain, both in the formative and summative processes of teaching and learning.

Cloete and Brenner, in [Chapter 7](#), shift our consideration to curriculum transformation and how particular interventions at the course level fit into this broader issue. Through engaging in a case study of the restructuring process of a first-year course on Film, Visual, and Performing Arts at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, these authors discuss how giving students a voice is a central aspect of transforming higher education.

[Chapter 8](#) by Wintjes offers a case study on a research project designed as part of a postgraduate course in the History of Art. By encouraging students to become active creators of knowledge from the beginning of their postgraduate experiences, Wintjes considers how transformation in higher education is effected by changing the relationship between students and knowledge creation. The author argues that engaging students in the research process as part of their learning experience excites their curiosity and engages them in societal issues.

Shifting to a media studies experience, Iqani and Falkof look to the how race and racial issues influence the process of transformation in higher education in [Chapter 9](#). Through adopting a narrative methodology, the authors discuss their own experiences of confronting race and racial issues

in the classroom. Two acutely emotional, personalised, and extremely challenging pedagogical moments in which race was encountered, negotiated, and problematised in the post-apartheid South Africa media studies classroom are explored.

Chapter 10 looks to the notion of transformation in Indian higher education by raising critical questions about the complex relationship of university education, culture of pedagogy, students' voice and the increasing societal inequities in India. Kurup and Singai explore how the tensions between traditional pedagogy and the culture of open pedagogy are converting the passive learners of the past into more active learners involved in reconstructing new knowledge. The ongoing crisis in Indian universities like Jawaharlal Nehru University and Hyderabad Central University are drawn on as testimony to this change.

Bagelman and Tremblay in **Chapter 11** consider the intersection of pedagogy and social innovation. Through exploring an innovative collaboration between higher education institutions and community organisations on Vancouver Island, Canada, the authors give insight into how transformation can be effected by connecting students with their community. They contend that real social change can come from such experiences and offer the Vancouver Island Social Innovation Zone as an example.

The social justice through transformation discussion as taken up in this book aims at considering how pedagogy can be used as an act of change that fundamentally reshapes how students and teachers engage and interact with society. It is fundamentally about returning higher education to its social justice roots, where the teaching, learning, and research environment orient students and their teachers towards a path of societal betterment through promoting more equal and just practices. In this vein, the book spans a variety of creative and intellectual modes of expression, maintains a critical orientation in line with what Fanon, Freire, Hall, hooks, amongst others, and offers practical insights into how to effect the change that the recent protests in South Africa, India, Chile, China, the United Kingdom and the United States have highlighted.

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NOTE

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